



# **RAFFLES WORLD ACADEMY**

## **LANGUAGE POLICY**



### **Introduction**

This document represents the school's essential agreements on language learning, teaching and assessing. All members of the academic staff are committed to this policy and responsible for the implementation, reviewing and upgrading of our language policy.

### **Raffles World Academy Mission Statement**

We are committed to excellence in education by striving to provide each student with opportunities to reach their full potential as lifelong learners in a holistic, challenging and supportive learning environment that will ultimately prepare them to play an active and responsible role as global citizens in a multicultural world.

### **Language Philosophy Statement**

Language is an expression of culture and must be valued as an essential part of a student's identity. It is the foundation of all learning. Recognising and supporting our students' mother tongues is crucial to developing their full potential. The Learner Profile, together with the five essential elements of the programme (knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and actions) are integral to teaching and learning language. Language study is a key factor in developing international understanding, in reinforcing cultural identity, enhancing personal growth and promoting effective communication. It permeates the entire curriculum. All members of the school community are language teachers and language learners.

### **Admissions, Placement and Tracking**

- We assess applicants through multidimensional assessment procedures, which include testing for English proficiency, appraisal of past records and current academic levels, students' literacy or language-readiness skills and observation of emotional and social development.
- We place students in appropriate instructional settings based on the data of our assessment procedures.
- We conduct ongoing assessment of students' academic and language accomplishments and needs.
- We collect representative samples of students' work to document linguistic and academic growth in language.

- We communicate clearly with parents regarding students' accomplishments and needs as they progress through the grades.

**For more detail, see our document “Assessment and Reporting Policy”.**

### **Teaching and Planning Practices**

We employ a variety of teaching styles and learning techniques to enable students to access to the whole curriculum, to cater for the variety of learning styles within each class and to ensure the progression and reinforcement of skills and concepts.

#### We expect teachers to:

- Present language through meaningful and authentic contexts
- Use a wide variety of teaching and assessment strategies
- Provide a balanced language programme as laid out in the MYP scope and sequence document
- Structure teaching and learning situations so that students have opportunities for success
- Plan in collaboration with other classroom teachers and specialist teachers to maintain consistency
- Provide challenges to students by giving them opportunities to reach their full potential
- Acknowledge differences in developmental stages, learning styles and previous language experiences
- Encourage parental involvement
- Publish student work
- Use questions as a tool for learning
- Use a wide variety of materials to enable every student to access the planned learning experience and to achieve the planned teaching and learning objectives
- Give students the opportunity to work in a variety of ways – whole class, groups (of differing sizes and composition), as pairs and individually, according to their needs, the nature of the activity and the learning objectives
- Build students' confidence and self-esteem and enable them to become effective language users by:
  - sharing teaching and learning objectives and clarifying expected outcomes in a way that students can understand
  - teaching students to self-monitor
  - encouraging students to learn from and support one another, and to realise that they do not all have to be at the same level or arrive at the same point at the same time
  - giving positive and constructive oral and/or written feedback
  - creating an environment where all students can make progress at their own pace

#### We plan activities where students:

- integrate prior and new knowledge
- acquire and use a range of learning skills
- solve problems individually and in groups

- reflect on their successes and challenges
- evaluate conflicting evidence and think critically
- accept that learning can involve uncertainty and difficulty

**Students are expected to speak English in all classes except Arabic, Islamic Studies, and other language classes.**

Recognising that language usage contributes to cognitive knowledge, students will:

- Develop their knowledge and understanding of the English language through purposeful use in listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- Learn to speak, read and write English developmentally, progressing across a continuum of skills in each area;
- Endeavour to express themselves confidently in English in a variety of situations;
- Be given the opportunity to take part in other language instruction as is deemed necessary for globally mobile students;
- Be encouraged to seek and use resources in their first language, as necessary, to help in the understanding of academic content;
- Respect each other as valued members of the school community regardless of their first language;
- Develop an appreciation of literature and a variety of texts;
- Establish links between subjects, cultures, and other areas of experience;
- Use Language as a vehicle for thought, creativity, reflection, learning and self-expression.

### **MYP English/Arabic A**

The following guidelines have been identified:

- Literacy develops when language has meaning and purpose;
- The five areas: Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing and Viewing, are interrelated;
- Communication is a cooperative process in which skills such as critical listening, questioning, persuasion and expressing ideas clearly are necessary;
- **Students studying Language and Literature for both English and Arabic must be proficient in the Language (at least phases 5 and 6) as detailed in the Language Acquisition guide.**
- Literacy skills must be developed across all subject areas;
- Students should develop skills in formal and informal communication and in real-world situations;
- The curriculum should be sensitive to the needs of all students. World literature (poetry, prose and drama) should form part of the school syllabus;
- The increasing need for computer literacy and the use of technological tools must be considered.
- End of Year assessments will assess a student's progress.

### **Languages B in the MYP (Arabic, Spanish, English, French, Mandarin)**

- In Language Acquisition, students will be grouped according to their level (phase). Phase 1 and 2 are beginner level. Phase 3 and 4 are intermediate. Phase 5 and 6 are advanced.
- When referring to 'Arab students', this means any student from an Arab country; students from UAE nationalities, GCC nationalities and other Arab countries are referred to as 'Arab'.
- Arab students take Arabic A in Grades 6 to 10 instead of Language B.
- Arab students take Arabic A in Grades 6 to 10 instead of Language B (Grade 12 is the last year for MOE book [Arabic A]).
- All other students are required to take Arabic B as well as one other Language B up to Grade 9. In Grade 10 they can drop Arabic B but continue with the other Language B.
- Students will be placed in Arabic acquisition classes according to their appropriate phase level, as outlined above.
- Once a student has selected the Language B option (other than Arabic) they will continue to study that language throughout the MYP until they achieve a satisfactory proficiency in phase 4. Only once they have achieved phase 4 will they be permitted to study an alternative language.
- Students studying English B (Language acquisition) must be proficient in English and demonstrate that they can achieve phase 5 or 6 before being permitted to study the English A pathway.
- Students will be set a diagnostic exam at the start of the year to determine the appropriate phase in Language Acquisition or English A.
- **English A** (Language and Literature) and **English B** (Language Acquisition) are blocked together on the timetable to allow initial movement between English A and English B following the diagnostic exam. Once a student has been placed in English A or B, further changes will only occur at the end of the school year and will be determined by assessments and teacher recommendation.
- If a student does not take Arabic B in Grade 10, they will have the time distributed to the core subjects and study hall sessions.
- If a student studies a language in Grade 9 and Grade 10, they will not be able to study the same language at Ab Initio level in Grade 11. If the language was only studied in Grades 6-8, they will be permitted to study it as an Ab Initio language in Grade 11.
- English B: EAL students will take English B blocked with English A classes until such time as they can access English A.

### **Students taking Language B (English B, Arabic B, French B, Spanish B, Mandarin B)**

In addition to the compulsory Arabic B up to Grade 9, students will study a Language B from the categories outlined above. The school currently offers French, Spanish, Arabic B and Mandarin B.

The Language B programme does not cater to the needs of mother tongue speakers, and they therefore must choose an alternative language from the choices above.

The English B pathway will replace EAL. Students who are taking English B can move to English A if their language reaches the required standard and the appropriate attainment has been met. If students start Grade 9 in English B, they must stay in English B until the end of Grade 10.

In Grades 6, 7 and 8, students will have the choice of studying French or Spanish. In Grades 9 and 10 students will continue with the same language that they started in Grade 6: Mandarin, French or Spanish. The Grade 9 and 10 French, Spanish and Mandarin courses prepare students for the eportfolio in Grade 10 and ultimately, for having access to Language B in Grade 11. Those students who would like to start a new language will be able to start Spanish or French Ab Initio in Grade 11.

### **Practices for implementing reading, writing, oral and visual skills**

In order to promote inquiry-based language learning within the context of the MYP, our school recognises the importance of incorporating the teaching and learning of language through the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry. The mastery of the essential language skills - reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing - is a vital part of a student's overall development.

#### Reading practices:

- Reading will take place in all subject areas, and students will read across the curriculum whenever appropriate.
- A variety of practices will be used when planning for instruction, including, but not limited to, guided reading groups, differentiated reading instruction, word lists, graphic organisers and the use of leveled reading material.
- Students will be encouraged to read for information, read for pleasure, read aloud expressively and also discuss, analyse, compare and contrast the texts they read.
- Students will be exposed to a variety of genres, including multicultural literature, poetry, plays, short stories, newspapers, magazines and informational texts.
- Students will learn how to understand, interpret and respond to the ideas, attitudes and feelings expressed in various texts, to think critically about what they read and to be able to make predictions and inferences based on information that is both explicit and implicit in a text.
- Teachers will promote and incorporate supplementary reading incentives and support programmes.
- Vocabulary building techniques will be used across the curriculum whenever appropriate, e.g. word walls, word of the day, spelling programmes, use of idioms, metaphors, and similes.

### Oral language practices:

- Teachers will model correct language use in conversation, while being sensitive to students' cultural backgrounds and mother tongues.
- Students will be provided with opportunities to develop and utilise oral language beyond everyday classroom conversations. This will be done through oral presentations, assemblies, debates, speeches, role-play, poetry recitations, songs, books on tape, listening stations and performing arts.
- Teachers will plan activities that expose students to conventions of oral language and aid them in responding appropriately to a range of contexts and audiences.

### Writing practices:

- Students' natural desire to communicate through writing will be fostered by giving real purpose to their writing, and by exposing them to varied, challenging and meaningful writing opportunities.
- There will be consistency in promoting the writing process (planning, drafting, editing, proofreading, revising and publishing) throughout the grade levels.
- Students will be encouraged to focus on meaning first rather than accuracy and to enjoy the writing process.
- Students will be provided with opportunities to express themselves in writing through different genres.
- Students will be provided with opportunities to acquire, develop and use language specific to relevant subject areas.
- Constructive feedback from teachers, peers, and other adults will support the development of writing.
- Teachers will model and provide instruction in the correct use of language conventions, including spelling, grammar, rules of punctuation and handwriting.
- We will incorporate a variety of spelling strategies including spelling conventions and patterns, high frequency words and unit-related vocabulary.

### Viewing and presenting practices:

- Students will have the opportunity to create visual presentations, and to use multimedia in a variety of situations and for a range of purpose and audience.
- Opportunities will be provided for students to view high quality performances in a variety of media.

## **Support for English as the Language of Instruction**

In the classroom the language of instruction is English, though it is recognised that as an international school other languages may be used for varying purposes during instructional activities. We aim to develop a level of language proficiency in English that enables students to perform to their best ability on all tasks related to the curriculum.

In line with the general belief that diversity in language is a positive element in the school, no language will ever be banned from use. We allow students to think or talk through unfamiliar or complex concepts in their first language to assist their understanding. Though the use of a student's first language is accepted, there will be times when the teacher needs to stipulate that a particular activity be undertaken solely in English in order to achieve the outcomes of the lesson. Students are encouraged to communicate with their peers in a way that will not result in some students being excluded as a result of language.

## **Support for the host country**

The host country language of Arabic shall be integrated within unit plans where applicable. Students will be encouraged to explore Arabic and UAE culture when discussing literary texts in lessons and when commenting on language features. Writing competitions such as the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature challenges students to draw upon their English and Arabic language and culture to produce a variety of poetry and short stories. Poetry written in Arabic is recited at these events.

Students will also be familiarised with Arabic around the school, where opportunities for vocabulary development are offered. National events such as UAE National Day and International Day, will be integrated within appropriate unit plans to celebrate the culture and diversity of the host country.

## **Differentiation in English lessons**

In English, students will be set in mixed ability groups to allow for widely differentiated lessons and activities. In grades 7 and 8, there will be one group allocated for gifted and talented students as identified by CAT4 scores. In grades 9 and 10, all classes will be set.

## **Support for Gifted and Talented Students**

Students who have been identified as Gifted and Talented receive differentiated instruction in class. Teachers use strategies that further encourage vocabulary development, reading and writing across the curriculum, and the exposure to various forms of literature and informational

texts. Teachers will choose texts to suit the ability levels in the classroom. Classroom teachers work with other specialists in order to ensure continuity of the delivery.

### **Support for SEN and EAL students**

Students who have been identified as SEN and EAL receive differentiated instruction in class. Some students, based on teacher recommendation, and as identified by CAT4 scores, will follow the English B route until such time as their skills in English have developed or reached the standard that they can access English A. Teachers will work closely with the SEN department using ILPs to provide specific support to individuals based on each student's need. Class sizes will be kept as small as possible in order to allow for more student and teacher interaction. Literature texts will be chosen to suit the level of the class and lessons will allow students to develop their functional English skills.

### **Mother Tongue**

Students who wish to study their Mother Tongue language as a language subject will have classes blocked with Language Acquisition (Language B classes). Or, if a student wishes to study a language offered by the school, they can study their mother tongue language outside of school time. A tutor for these classes must be paid for and provided by the student. The hiring of a tutor for these courses is not optional and is a requirement of the programme.

### **Library Media Specialist**

The Library Media Specialist works closely with teachers, students, parents and the school administration to ensure the availability of curricular and support materials that are necessary for the development of languages. The Library Media Specialist holds workshops for teachers and students so that they can effectively access the many online resources that are available. The library has print and non-print books, CDs, posters and recorded books in a variety of languages. Resources are available to teachers, students and parents. Students in Grades 6-8 have timetabled access to the library and I.C.T.

### **Language Development in the context of the IB Learner Profile**

In line with the MYP, the language programme not only helps students to gain an instrumental means of communication, it helps them develop the cognitive, emotional and attitudinal skills which promote a well-balanced and holistic education. We strive for students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to be:

**Inquirers:** They use language as their prime medium of inquiry to make sense of the world around them.

**Thinkers:** They use language precisely and skillfully in the context of higher level thinking to express their thoughts and ideas clearly and succinctly.

**Communicators:** They are confident users of oral and written language in a variety of situations.

**Risk-takers:** They attempt to read, write and speak in situations where they may not feel totally competent.

**Knowledgeable:** They understand the internal structures of language and the various influences on its development. They have experience with a wide range of literature and acquire the vocabulary and understanding to discuss different literary styles.

**Principled:** They are aware that language is powerful, that it can have a profound effect and that it must be used responsibly.

**Caring:** They show responsible, caring attitudes towards the use of language and they value literature for the insight it gives into the feelings of others.

**Open-minded:** They respect differences and similarities between languages and dialects. They are aware of the use of language as an expression of bias and strive to maintain an objective stance.

**Well-balanced:** They are aware of the need for an educated person to be an effective communicator. They use literature for both learning and leisure.

**Reflective:** They reflect upon their own levels of language development in their mother tongue and other languages. They consciously work at improving their language proficiency.

### Language Policy for DP

At RWA, English is the working language of the DP and the medium of instruction. All subjects other than languages are taught in English. Students write their Extended Essay in English unless the EE is in a Group 1 or Group 2 other than English. TOK Internal and External Assessment are presented in English. All CAS paperwork must be completed in English.

#### Group 1 – Language A

At present, the school offers only English A: Language and Literature and English A: Literature HL and SL as taught courses.

In order to be enrolled in the above, a student should be able to demonstrate adequate fluency in the language and competency in literary analysis, which would be measured as follows:

- Grade 5 or above in English at the end of MYP Year 5 for entry to English A HL;
- Grade 4 or above in English at the end of MYP Year 5 for entry to English A SL.

For students entering RWA in Grade 11, this would be measured by performance in the entrance test and a personal interview.

A student may offer Mother Tongue Language A SL as a **school supported self-taught** course. In order for a student to achieve their Diploma, they must adhere to the following conditions:

- ✓ Regular access to a qualified private tutor, who would be reimbursed by the parent;
- ✓ A clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of the student and the school as outlined by the Self Taught Languages Coordinator;
- ✓ A commitment to adhere to the timeline and deadlines for submission of work as imposed by the school;
- ✓ A full list of works to be studied (from the approved lists) submitted to the school by the end of September of Grade 11.

### **Group 2 – Languages, B, Ab Initio**

- The school makes decisions regarding which languages and levels are offered.
- Group 2 Languages may not be offered as self-taught courses.

Language B HL/SL – May be taken by a student who:

- Has adequate fluency in the language - which would usually be a result of 3 or more years of study of the language.

**The above would be measured on performance in the eportfolio or in the end of year exam in MYP Grade 10. New students and students in the foundation class who are interested in SL will also be required to sit an entrance test. Whether the student is eligible for the SL or HL level course is on recommendation of the teacher and Head of Department.**

### **Language Ab Initio**

This is a course open to a student who:

- Has no more than one year's experience of learning the language or has studied the language previously, but has had a gap of three or more years since the last period of study (not in Grades 9 – 10);
- Is not the mother-tongue speaker.

### **Policy Review**

This policy is a working document and as such will be reviewed by the Language Committee and academic staff regularly.

**The following criteria will be used to measure its success:**

1. Has the quality of student learning been enhanced?
2. Has the quality of teaching been improved?

3. Can we identify a range of teaching and learning styles in each classroom?
4. Are staff and students following procedures?
5. Is there clear evidence of assessment informing planning?
6. Has any part of the policy been difficult to implement, or been ignored?

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